

FOLLOWING JESUS:

"BEST PRACTICES" FOR A MEANINGFUL LIFE

KINGDOM PRAYER & STUDY GUIDE MARCH 17-23, 2019

Week 9: SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

© 2019 Caldwell Ministries.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 or under the terms of any license permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked MSG are taken from THE MESSAGE, copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Scripture quotations marked The Voice are taken from The Voice™. Copyright © 2012 by Ecclesia Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked Judaica Press are from A New English Translation of the Text, Rashi and a Commentary Digest, copyright © 1982, edited by A. J. Rosenberg. All rights reserved.

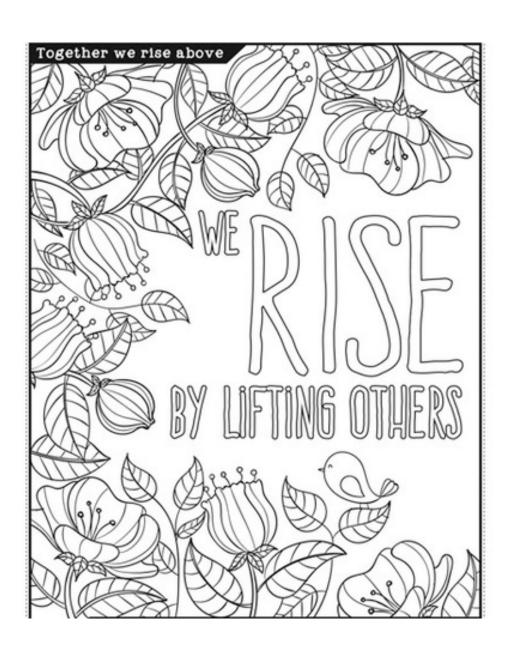
Scripture quotations marked OJB are taken from The Orthodox Jewish Bible fourth edition, OJB. Copyright © 2002,2003,2008,2010, 2011 by Artists for Israel International. All rights reserved.

Contents

WEEK 9 (March 17-23, 2019)

SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Day 57: Spiritual Accountability/Companionship	7
Day 58: Spiritual Direction/Mentorship	.15
Day 59: Wesleyan "Class Meetings"	.25
Day 60: Wesleyan "Band Meetings"	.33
Day 61: Test-Drive Group Accountability	.41
Day 62: Test-Drive Spiritual Direction/Mentorship	.53
Day 63: "Lone Sheep"	61



Day 57:

Spiritual Accountability & Companionship

1. Center Down

Our breath prayer for today: As you inhale, whisper, "Iron sharpens iron..." As you exhale, whisper, "...and we are made in Your Image."

2. Slowly read aloud the following Scripture

It's better to have a partner than go it alone. Share the work, share the wealth. And if one falls down, the other helps, But if there's no one to help, tough!

Two in a bed warm each other.

Alone, you shiver all night.

By yourself you're unprotected.

With a friend you can face the worst.

Can you round up a third?

A three-stranded rope isn't easily snapped.

(Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, MSG)

For further exploration

Video: http://b.link/EcclesiastesRelationship

Article: http://b.link/SmallGroupHistory

3. Kingdom Prayer

Gracious God, thank You for loving us so much that You sent Jesus Christ to be our Lord, Savior and Friend. Thank You for creating the gift of friendship and blessing us with Godly relationships. Thank You for calling us Your friends. We are honored to be Your friend. Abba Father, Your unfailing love is better than life itself; how we praise You! We will praise You as long as we live, lifting up our hands to You in prayer. We will praise Your Name with singing, and we will honor You with thanksgiving. We give thanks to You because You are near. People everywhere will tell of Your wonderful deeds.

Heavenly Father, we confess that it is Your will that our vouth develop children and and maintain Godly, healthy friendships. Your declares Word that people are better off than one, for they can help each other If one falls, the other can reach out and Our children and youth will have Godly friends who will seek first Your Kingdom above all else and live righteously so that they will receive from You all that they need. We decree that their friends will love You, Lord, with all of their hearts, souls, minds and strength and they will love our children and youth as they love themselves. We decree that the parents and guardians of our youth and children will model friendships that are wholesome and Godly so that they will understand what friendship really

looks like. In Jesus' Name, we cancel every toxic friendship and destroy the assignments of the devil against our children and youth. We confess that our young people will not follow the advice of the wicked, stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.

I will pray for the following children and youth to find and maintain healthy, Godly friendships:

Loving Father, some of our children and youth struggle when it comes to making friends. Holy Spirit, please help them to walk in the love of Christ and draw Godly friends to themselves. In their quest for friendship, help our children and youth to love themselves. Instruct our parents and guardians on how to help their child or youth to see themselves through the Father's eyes. Give them the words to be able to help their child or youth to understand how precious Your thoughts are towards them. As they grow in self-esteem and self-worth, help them to grow in boldness and confidence in the way that they carry themselves so that they will attract Godly, positive people into their lives. Help our children and youth to be kind, fair, and friendly.

Merciful Father, forgive our children and youth if they have intentionally isolated other students or made others to feel inferior. Forgive them for succumbing to peer pressure in their desire to fit in with a certain group of people. Forgive our parents and guardians for

not teaching their children how to be good friends and affirming them in Your Word. Forgive them if they have belittled or made light of their child or youth's desire to have friends. As for me, Lord, forgive me for (list any sins that you have committed).

Holy Spirit, remind our children and youth of those they need to forgive and help them to be quick to forgive. As for me, Holy Spirit, bring to my remembrance those I need to forgive. (Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal names or faces of people that you may need to forgive. As He reveals them to you, say, "I forgive name of person(s)." Now, trust the Lord to heal any wounds in your soul caused by unforgiveness.)

Holy Spirit, help our children and youth not to yield to temptation but deliver them from the evil one.

Glorious King, You are honored in Judah; Your Name is great in Israel. You are glorious and more majestic than the everlasting mountains. You are the King of Glory; the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord invincible in battle! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture References for the Written Text: Psalm 63:3-4, Psalm 69:30, Psalm 75:1, Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, Matthew 6:33, Mark 12:30-31, Psalm 1:1, Psalm 139:17, Matthew 6:13, Psalm 76:1,4, Psalm 24:8

4. Concepts to Consider

This week the Christian "Best Practice" we are exploring is Spiritual accountability and companionship. If you look throughout the Bible a fair number of the "you" pronouns are third person, pointing to the "you all" dynamic inherent in God's story. Some of the passages that we tend to interpret as being directed to us personally are actually directed to a group of people, the community of faith, *i.e.*, the church.

The "dance" between the individual and the community in Scripture is important to notice because Biblically speaking our salvation is both an individual and a corporate process. Just as study, prayer, and worship are both an individual and a church function.

A good example of this interweaving of individual and corporate is in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6, & 7). From the outset, Jesus is addressing both the larger crowd (3rd-person pronouns) and the smaller "in-group" (2nd-person pronouns) of the disciples seated closer to Him. From the start of His ministry, Jesus cares for both the individual and one's restoration to relationships within the community. Shalom/salvation is about wholeness on all levels.

In our hyper-customized and individualistic Western cultural context, this kind of communal perspective can be somewhat uncomfortable for us. You see, in the ancient Near-Eastern world the concept of an individual's "right to privacy" was unheard of. It's difficult, but with help of the Holy Spirit, we have to work hard to not to read our modern sensibilities into the Biblical text.

The point in this discussion is that we are built for community and our salvation journey is not one that we take alone. It's not just about "me and Jesus," it's about a community of faith moving forward under the Grace of God for the sake of the world around us. People need Jesus, and they need to see the church ("us") act like Jesus as much as they need to see "me" act like Jesus.

This week we will see how Spiritual friendships and covenant accountability are a part of our historical DNA as Christians and--in particular--as Wesleyan followers of Jesus and how we can begin to incorporate these ideals into our faith experience.

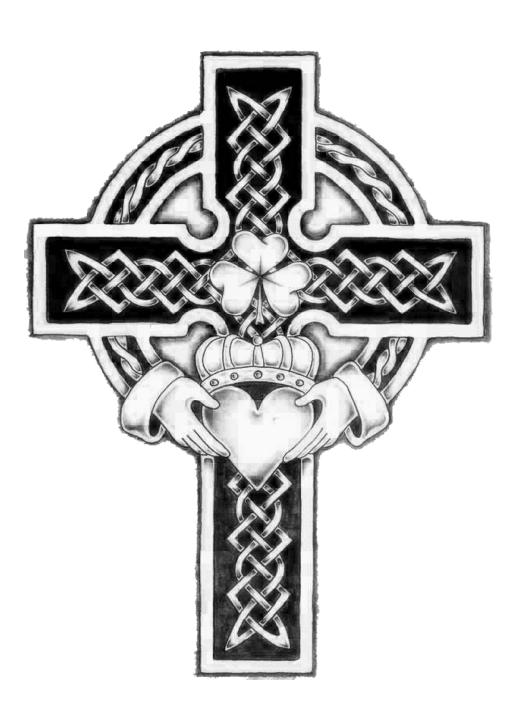
5. Reflection Questions:

a. Personal Reflection. Have you ever participated in a spiritual encouragement/ accountability group? If so, what were your experiences (positive and negative)? If you've never participated in a group, why not?

b. Kingdom Reflection. Why do you think so many renewal movements (*i.e.,* revivals throughout Church history) have begun or been sustained through small groups?

Optional Time of Centering/Soaking:

If possible, take some time, perhaps 5 to 15 minutes, to get into a comfortable position and simply allow the Lord to minister to you at a deep level (Psalm 42:7). Turn off or put down all distractions. Close your eyes. Hold in your thoughts a meaningful word, phrase, or image from the Scripture you read today. Release all other thoughts and concerns into the Presence of the Lord. If your thoughts wander, that's okay, just gently return to your Scriptural word, phrase, or image. You may want to set a timer.



Day 58:

Spiritual Direction & Mentorship

1. Center Down

Our breath prayer for today: As you inhale, whisper, "We do not walk alone..." As you exhale, whisper, "... You are Emmanuel."

2. Slowly read aloud the following Scripture

Iron sharpens iron, and a person sharpens the Imagebearing capacity ("face") of their companion. (Proverbs 27:17, PKO)

For further exploration:

Video: http://b.link/IronSharpensFootball

http://b.link/IronSharpensHipHop

3. Kingdom Prayer

Abba Father, we thank You for righteous fellowship among the believers in our church and beyond. We thank You for ordering our steps in Your Word. Thank You for the events, activities and programs within our Church Family. We are grateful for our fellowship and communion which we have with You, our Father; Jesus, our Savior; and the Holy Spirit, our Sustainer. We thank You with all of our hearts as we meet with Your Godly people. Lord. You are an awesome God. Your deeds are so amazing; all who delight in You should ponder them. Everything You do reveals Your glory and majesty. Your righteousness never fails. You are wonderful, and Your Name is highly exalted. You are worthy of all our praise. You are worthy of the glory, honor and power. Lord, the heavens declare Your glory and the skies display Your craftsmanship.

Mighty Father, Your will is for us to dwell together in unity. As a Church Family, we declare that we will motivate one another to acts of love and good works. We will not neglect our meeting together, but we will encourage one another in the faith. We will not get tired of doing what is good for each other. As a result, we expect to reap a harvest of blessing at the right time. We will not give up and at every opportunity, we will do good to everyone—especially to those in our family of faith. Iron sharpens iron so we confess that we will surround ourselves with those who have like minds so that we are positioned to glorify You in our public and private lives. We confess that we will engage in righteous fellowship and forsake all that will deter us from fulfilling Your will. Father, we confess that we are blessed because we do not follow

the advice of the wicked, stand around with sinners or join in with mockers, but our delight is in Your Word. By faith, we declare that we are as trees planted along the riverbanks that bear fruit each season and we prosper in all that we do. We declare that we will be doers of Your Word and not hearers only. We decree that we will fight for righteous fellowship and we will win. Lord, we decree that we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ.

Holy Spirit, we ask that You align our relationships with Your will in our homes, church, jobs and communities. Holy Spirit, show each of us how to organize our calendars and schedules so that Godly fellowship is more of a priority. Send Godly friends to those who are lonely. Help our Church Family to set the example of what righteous fellowship looks like. Knit our hearts closer together. Lord, help us to be obedient as You order our steps. Give us the power to crucify our flesh and walk in Your light. As we yield to the power of the Holy Spirit, help us to drop our gossip buddies, smoking buddies, promiscuous buddies, club-hopping buddies and any one who the devil may use to keep us from glorifying God through our fellowship with the righteous. Help us to let our light so shine before people that they may see our good works and glorify You, our Heavenly Father.

Holy Spirit, show me how to strengthen the Godordained relationships in my life. Show me those relationships that I need to end and give me the strength to end them:

Merciful Father, forgive us for our sins. Forgive those who do not participate in Church Family activities. Forgive those for the unrighteous relationships that keep them from Your best for their lives. Forgive those for disobedience when You have told them to end certain relationships and they refuse to do so. Forgive all of us for putting our work in front of family and friends. Forgive us for acts of sinfulness, including: hatred. rebellion, murder, idolatry, homosexuality, greed, racism, adultery, fornication, injustice, and violence. Forgive us for the works of the flesh and the pride of life. Forgive us for having fellowship or relationship with anything that is not of You. Forgive us for the doors that we may have opened without knowing it from our childhood or adult experiences. Help us to know that there is no condemnation to those of us who are in Christ and that as we confess our sins, we are forgiven and that You remember them no more. Father, forgive me for (list any sins that you have committed.)

Holy Spirit, remind us all of those we need to forgive and help us to be quick to forgive. As for me, Holy Spirit, bring to my remembrance those I need to forgive. (Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you names or faces of people that you may need to forgive. As He reveals them, say, "I forgive name of person(s)." Now, trust the Lord to heal any wounds in your soul caused by unforgiveness.)

Holy Spirit, help us all not to yield to temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

O Lord, the God of our ancestor Israel, You are to be praised forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, power, glory, victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is Yours. This is Your Kingdom, Lord, and You are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from You alone, for You rule over everything. Power and might are in Your hand, and it is at Your discretion that people are made great and given strength. O Lord our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture References for Written Text: Psalm 111:1-3, Psalm 19:1, Psalm 133:1, Hebrews 10:24-25, Galatians 6:9-10, Proverbs 27:17, Psalm 1:1-3, James 1:22, Romans 8:37 (NKJV), Matthew 5:16, Romans 8:1, Matthew 6:13, I Chronicles 29:10-13

4. Concepts to Consider

The above verse from Proverbs stands among a set of that discusses loyalty and faithfulness. many interpretations Among the suggested scholars, the one that's being emphasized here is that this verse alludes to what happens are committed--in God's love people grace-- to bringing out the holy best in one another, even when it's "a sword fight" at times.

None of us can see our "own image" clearly; indeed, we can't perfectly even see ourselves in a mirror. We see what we think we see. God knows our limitations and has given us each other as potential "reflectors" of Himself for the sake of others. When we are in trusting, covenant relationship with other believers, and we have given them permission to do so, we can truly "sharpen" one another in holy listening, conversation, prayer, and study.

The "sharpening" by people in the faith who are further along the road in the Christian journey is "baked into" the Discipleship life. In schools where people study Torah (a Yeshiva), students are always put into pairs. No student ever studies alone. And usually more experienced scholars are paired with less experienced ones for a time.

Where do we see mentoring in the Bible? We can look at the relationships between Barnabas and Paul (Acts chapters 9-15) and then Paul and Timothy (Acts 16; 1&2 Timothy) as models of "iron sharpening iron" and improving our Godly "image bearing." This is a chain of persons who mentored and spiritually directed someone "younger" in the faith.

Today, trained "spiritual directors" are found among many Christian denominations (Methodists, Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, etc.) and they are skilled in the art of holy listening, gentle guidance, and prayer. Spiritual mentorship and direction is not "counseling" nor is it meant to be a formal, clinical therapeutic experience. For instance, if you booked a personal retreat at the Cenacle Retreat Center here in Houston (https://www.cenaclesisters.org/houston/our-ministry), you would be offered a spiritual director to help guide your retreat experience for one to eight days, depending on what you felt called to do.

On a more informal basis, it can be very helpful to create a network of persons who are spiritually "older" than yourself upon whom you can call for Godly listening, prayer, and wisdom.

One final thought:

"Spiritual direction is the facilitation of one's spiritual formation through а covenanted relationship with another, formalized in regular meetings for inquiry, conversation, and reflection around one's personal experience. The spiritual director is one who, by virtue of personal holiness and spiritual maturity, helps the spiritual directee to pay attention to the presence and work of God in her or his life. Within the Wesleyan/Methodist theological tradition of Christianity, holiness of heart and life is the goal with an interconnected system of spiritual direction for all as the means toward that end. The sharing of stories in small accountability groups or through public testimony, and the linking of personal devotional practices with service among the poor are emphasized as means of grace."

(Rev. Douglas Hardy, PhD, Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City, Missouri, USA)

5. Reflection Questions

a. Personal Reflection. Have you ever had a spiritual director or mentor? If so, what was your experience like (both positive and negative)? Have you ever been someone's spiritual director/mentor? If so, how was that experience?

b. Kingdom Reflection. Why do you think part of our collective journey in Christ is meant to-in part--be formed through healthy director/mentor relationships like we see in Scripture?

Optional Time of Centering/Soaking:

If possible, take some time, perhaps 5 to 15 minutes, to get into a comfortable position and simply allow the Lord to minister to you at a deep level (Psalm 42:7). Turn off or put down all distractions. Close your eyes. Hold in your thoughts a meaningful word, phrase, or image from the Scripture you read today. Release all other thoughts and concerns into the Presence of the Lord. If your thoughts wander, that's okay, just gently return to your Scriptural word, phrase, or image. You may want to set a timer.



Day 59:

Wesleyan "Class Meetings"

1. Center Down

Our breath prayer for today: As you inhale, whisper, "We gather together..." As you exhale, whisper, "...to hear from You, Lord."

2. Slowly read aloud the following Scripture

Soon afterwards [Jesus] went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources. (Luke 8:1-3, CEB)

For further exploration:

Articles: http://historical.today/WesleyClassMeetings

http://b.link/WesleyanGroups2

Video: http://veteran.watch/SmallGroup

3. Kingdom Prayer

Blessed Father, we thank You for the ministries of the Body of Christ. Thank You for each ministry member who serves Your people and Your Kingdom. Thank You for using the ministries of the Body of Christ to bless and improve the lives of the Body of Christ as well as the community. Lord, we praise Your great and awesome Name! Your Name is holy. Mighty King, You love justice and have established fairness. You have acted with justice and righteousness throughout Israel. We exalt You, our God. We bow low before Your feet, for You alone are holy!

Awesome Father, we know that there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. There are diversities of activities, but it is You, God, who works all in all. We confess that the ministries of the Body of Christ operate as one. Having gifts differing according to the grace that has been given to them, we confess that our ministries will use these gifts to serve You and are kindly affectionate to one another in brotherly love. They will be of the same mind towards one Lord, we declare that the members who serve in ministry will not grow weary while doing well. They will indeed reap a reward as they do not faint. We confess that they will commit their ministry plans to You. Lord, and trust that You will cause them to succeed. We declare that each ministry in the Body of Christ reflect the love, hope, peace, faith and discipline of the Kingdom.

Holy Spirit, please continue to unify the ministries of the Body of Christ so that they operate seamlessly and as a well oiled machine. Please anoint the ministry leaders with fresh ideas and creative ways to do ministry. Show them how to expand to impact more lives in the community for the Kingdom. Please bless the families, homes and of each iobs worker. Teach them how to live balanced healthy lives. Holy Spirit, please touch the hearts of more of the Body of Christ members to become actively involved in ministries.

Today, I will pray for the following Body of Christ ministries:

Magnificent Father, please forgive those ministry members for disobedience, selfish-ambitions, pride, gossip, perversion and any act of sinfulness. Forgive them for depending on their own strength and intellect instead of Your supernatural power and authority. Forgive those ministry leaders who do not consult You regarding the direction You have for their ministry. Lord, forgive those members who are not using their gifts and talents in ministry. Lord, forgive me for (list any sins that you have committed).

Holy Spirit, remind us all of those we need to forgive and help us to be quick to forgive. As for me, Holy Spirit,

bring to my remembrance those I need to forgive. (Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal names or faces of people that you may need to forgive. As He reveals them say, "I forgive name of person(s)." Now, trust the Lord to heal any wounds in your soul caused by unforgiveness.)

Holy Spirit, help our ministry members not to yield to temptation but deliver them from the evil one.

Eternal King, the heavens declare Your glory and the skies proclaim the work of Your hands. You are the Lord Most High, the great King over all the earth. Lord, You are worthy to receive glory, honor, and power. You created all things and by Your will they exist and were created. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

4. Concepts to Consider

Adapted from

"The Class Meeting," by Joe Iovino, UMC Communications (http://b.link/WesleyClassMeeting)

["The Class Meeting"] is not the latest innovation in church growth, but an adaptation of what John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, was doing in 1700s England.

Methodism began with a small group. Then, as the movement spread, a specific type of gathering called the

Class Meeting became central to what it meant to be a Methodist. Historically, Class Meetings "made sure that every Methodist was connected to other Methodists, so no one was left out, ignored, or overlooked," notes the Rev. Kevin Watson, a United Methodist elder and Assistant Professor of Wesleyan and Methodist Studies at Candler School of Theology. "They relentlessly focused every Methodist on the current state of their relationship with God. And they connected people to others who were at different stages of the Christian life."

Both Wesley in England and Asbury in America considered Class Meeting attendance mandatory. Admittance to the larger Society Meeting required a ticket from a Class Leader, validating one's faithful participation in a Class Meeting.

"Class Meetings were required, because they were believed to be particularly helpful in people's growth in the Christian life, at any stage," explains Watson.

[Class meetings are guided by] a very simple structure. A group of about a dozen people gathers weekly to take turns answering a single question. In 18th century English, Wesley asked, "How does your soul prosper?" or "How is it with your soul?" Today we might say, "How's your spiritual life?"

The conversations that follow are powerful. It doesn't happen overnight, but through answering that question together Class Meeting members grow closer to one another and closer to Christ. They begin to "watch over one another in love."

When we enter into these types of conversations regularly, lives are changed. Connecting, growing, and journeying together forms disciples as they reflect on and share their answers to a single question.

To start a similar group, simply invite some friends together and ask the question, "How's your spiritual life?" Then see where the Holy Spirit leads.

A great resource to learn about what Wesley's Class Meetings looked like then and could look today, is *Kevin Watson's The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience.* The book includes a study guide that helps groups begin the transition from being information-driven to transformation-driven and watching over one another in [Christian] love.

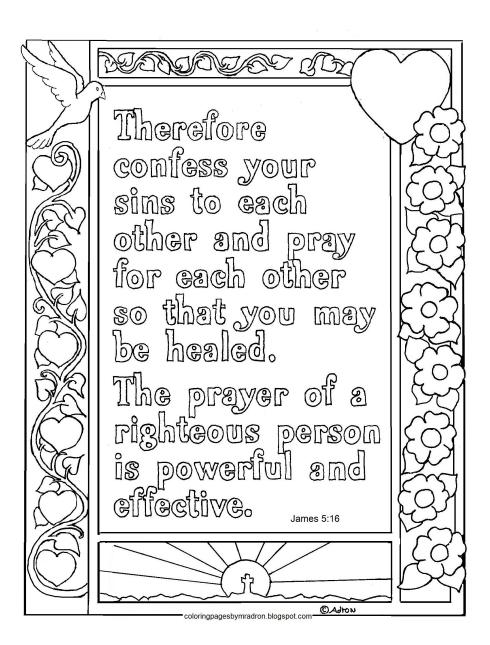
5.Reflection Questions

a.Personal Reflection. So...how *is* it with your spiritual life?

b. Kingdom Reflection. How do you think being accountable to one another in the Body of Christ can bring others to Jesus and help bring the Kingdom of God?

Optional Time of Centering/Soaking:

If possible, take some time, perhaps 5 to 15 minutes, to get into a comfortable position and simply allow the Lord to minister to you at a deep level (Psalm 42:7). Turn off or put down all distractions. Close your eyes. Hold in your thoughts a meaningful word, phrase, or image from the Scripture you read today. Release all other thoughts and concerns into the Presence of the Lord. If your thoughts wander, that's okay, just gently return to your Scriptural word, phrase, or image. You may want to set a timer.



Day 60:

Wesleyan "Band Meetings"

1. Center Down

Our breath prayer for today. As you inhale, whisper, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God..." As you exhale whisper, "...have mercy on me a sinner."

2. Slowly read aloud the following Scripture

Don't grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look—the Judge is standing at the door! For examples of patience in suffering, dear brothers and sisters, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy. But most of all, my brothers and sisters, never take an oath, by heaven or earth or anything else. Just say a simple yes or no, so that you will not sin and be condemned.

Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord.

Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven.

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.

My dear brothers and sisters, if someone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back, you can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins. (James 5:9-20, NLT)

3. Kingdom Prayer

Beloved Father, thank You for loving, forgiving and saving families. Thank You for giving them opportunities each day to show love and forgiveness to their neighbors, employers, friends, families and others. Thank You for increasing Your presence, power, anointing and abundance in their work and personal lives. Lord, You are great! You are most worthy of praise! No one can measure Your greatness. Families will let all that they are praise You, Lord; with their whole hearts, they will praise Your Holy Name. They will never forget the good things You do for them. You forgive all their sins and heal all their diseases.

You crown them with lovingkindness and tender mercies. You fill their lives with good things. Their youth is renewed like that of the eagle's!

Righteous Father, Your Word tells families that they are to make allowance for the faults of others and forgive anyone who offends them. Thev remember You forgave them, so they must forgive others. They will be guick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger. We expect families to show deep love for each other and their family members and friends because love covers a multitude of sins. They will not copy the behavior and customs of this world but will let You transform them into new persons by changing the way they think. Then they will learn to know Your will for them, Lord, which is good and pleasing and perfect. By faith, we confess that families will not worry about anything; instead, they will pray about everything. They will tell You what they need and thank You for all You have done. We pray that they will be strengthened with all Your glorious power so they will have all the endurance and patience they need to succeed. They will be filled with joy!

Holy Spirit, reveal how I can pray for families to forgive themselves and others today:

Holy Spirit, help families understand that God loves them unconditionally. Reveal any unforgiveness that is in their hearts and give them wisdom and

the courage to seek spiritual and/or professional counseling to identify the root cause so they may heal. Remind them that when they walk in unforgiveness, they are walking in disobedience away from You and out of alignment with Your plans for them. Help them to understand unforgiveness, which is classified as a disease in medical books, can lead to heart disease, cancer and other stress-related illnesses. Touch and renew the hearts of families so they release the past and go forward, fully forgiving others of all offenses as You forgive them. Help them not to be so easily offended. Give them the peace and freedom that come from letting go and allowing You to fill their hearts with love.

Merciful Father, please forgive families for all acts of sinfulness, including jealousy, contempt, pride, bitterness, criticism, lying, gossiping, hatred, holding grudges and seeking revenge. Help them when they refuse to forgive family members who have done hurtful things. Forgive those families who choose not to forgive others for past offenses. Lord, forgive me for *(list any sins that you have committed)*.

Holy Spirit, remind all families of those they need to forgive and help them to be quick to forgive. As for me, Holy Spirit, bring to my remembrance those I need to forgive. (Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal names or faces of people that you may need to forgive. As He reveals them, say "I forgive name of person(s)." Now, trust the Lord to heal any wounds in your soul caused by unforgiveness.)

Holy Spirit, help families not to yield to temptation but deliver them from the evil one.

Triumphant Lord, You are the eternal King; Your rule is everlasting. All the people of the earth are nothing compared to You. All of Your acts are just and true. You alone have held the oceans in Your hand. You measured the heavens with Your fingers and know the weight of the earth. The Lord God Almighty is Your Name. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

4. Concepts to Consider

Before reading the summary below, please watch the following video: http://b.link/BandMeeting

Traditionally in the Methodist movement, once someone had been in a "Class meeting" for awhile (usually a year, one was examined to see if they were ready to "level up" to a "Band Meeting" or a deep-level accountability group.

Adapted and expanded from Dr. Kevin Watson's "Small Group Bands":

During the Great Awakening of the 18th century, John Wesley famously quipped that justifying grace is only the door to salvation, while sanctification is the house. The key to the spiritual revival in England and America was the organization of Christians into various small groups, then called select societies, class meetings, and bands.

The purpose of each group was to pursue holiness together. These structures allowed for mutual accountability where spiritual friends were confessing sin

without fear of condemnation. They regularly asked these questions of one another: 1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting? 2. What temptations have you met with? 3. How were you delivered? 4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not? 5. Have you nothing you desire to keep secret? By ordering people according to gender and marital status, Christians received encouraging micro-community that catalyzed their spiritual growth and realigned the spiritual trajectory of entire nations.

5. Reflection Questions

- + Take a moment to reflect on the kinds of temptations or sin that you struggle with. Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate you if needed. Are your struggles typically spectacular sins, or are they harder for others to detect?
- + Have you ever experienced a circle of people where you could be fully known, and yet fully loved? Can you think of competing offerings outside of the church—in secular culture—where this vision is lived out? Share an experience when one of your faults was intimately known yet you were nonetheless loved and accepted as a person.

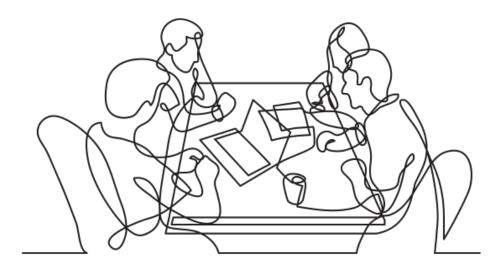
+ North American culture temps us to conceive of ourselves as individuals with accountability to no one, except perhaps God. Is this vision of spirituality attested to anywhere in Scripture? Can you find places in Scripture that resist this kind of vision?

+ Are there certain boundaries you have placed around your willingness to grow in sanctifying grace and holiness? What steps might you take to grow in your determination to do whatever it takes to be right with God and grow in holiness?

+ Is there a small group of men or women that you could trust with your true self? What questions could you ask one another at a band-like small group meeting?

Optional Time of Centering/Soaking:

If possible, take some time, perhaps 5 to 15 minutes, to get into a comfortable position and simply allow the Lord to minister to you at a deep level (Psalm 42:7). Turn off or put down all distractions. Close your eyes. Hold in your thoughts a meaningful word, phrase, or image from the Scripture you read today. Release all other thoughts and concerns into the Presence of the Lord. If your thoughts wander, that's okay, just gently return to your Scriptural word, phrase, or image. You may want to set a timer.



Day 61:

Test-Drive Group Accountability

1. Center Down

Our breath prayer: As you inhale, whisper, "We seek to be... As you exhale whisper, "...on one accord with You."

2. Slowly read aloud the following Scripture

And [the Church] devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, a ending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47, ESV)

For further exploration:

Videos: http://b.link/SmallGroupStartup

3. Kingdom Prayer

Abba Father, we thank You with all of our hearts as we meet with Your Godly people. Your deeds are so amazing; all who delight in You should ponder them. Everything You do reveals Your glory and majesty. Your righteousness never fails. You wonderful and Your Name is highly exalted. You are worthy of all our praise. You are worthy of the glory, honor and power. Lord, the heavens declare Your glory and the skies display Your craftsmanship. Lord, we thank You for righteous fellowship among the believers in our church and beyond. We thank You for ordering our steps in Your Word. Thank You for the events, activities and programs at our local churches that help to create fellowship within our Church Family. We are grateful for our fellowship and communion which we have with You, our Father. Jesus, our Savior, and the Holy Spirit, our Sustainer. Lord, You are an awesome God.

Mighty Father, Your will is for us to dwell together in unity. As the Body of Christ, we declare that we will think of ways to motivate one another through acts of love and good works. We will not get tired of doing what is good for each other. As a result, we expect to reap a harvest of blessing at the right time. We will not give up and at every opportunity, we will do

good to everyone—especially to those in our family of faith. We will not neglect our meeting together, but we will encourage one another in the faith. Iron sharpens iron so we confess that we will surround ourselves with those who have the mind of Christ so that we are positioned to glorify You in our public and private lives. Father, You asked us to meet together with Your people. We confess that we will engage in righteous fellowship through our churches and social gatherings and forsake all that will deter us from fulfilling Your will. Father, we confess that we are blessed because we do not follow the advice of the wicked, stand around with sinners or join in with mockers, but our delight is in Your Word. By faith, we declare that we are as trees planted along the riverbanks that bear fruit each season and we prosper in all that we do. We declare that we will be doers of Your Word and not hearers only. We decree that we will fight for righteous fellowship and we will win. Lord, we decree that we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ.

Holy Spirit, we ask that You align our relationships with in our homes, churches, jobs communities. Holy Spirit, show each of us how to organize our calendars and schedules so that Godly fellowship is more of a priority. Send Godly friends to those who are lonely. Help us and our churches to set the example of what righteous fellowship looks like. Knit our hearts closer together. Lord, help us to be obedient as You order our steps. Give us the power to crucify our flesh and walk in Your light. As we yield to the power of the Holy Spirit, help us to drop our gossip buddies, smoking buddies, promiscuous buddies, clubhopping buddies, and any one who the devil may use

to keep us from glorifying God through our fellowship with the righteous. Holy Spirit, heal the wounds of those who were hurt by people in the church. Rebuild confidence in You and Your creation, the Church. Holy Father, lead them to the community of faith You have chosen for them. Help us to let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify You, our Heavenly Father.

Holy Spirit, show me how to strengthen the God-ordained relationships in my life. Show me those relationships that I need to end and give me the strength to end them:

Merciful Father, forgive us for our sins. Forgive those who do not participate in Godly fellowship. Forgive those who do not honor and participate in Your institution, the Church. Forgive those for the unrighteous relationships that keep them from Your best for their lives. Forgive those for disobedience when You have told them to end certain relationships and they refuse to do so. Forgive all of us for putting our work, including ministries, in front of family and friends. Forgive us for acts of sinfulness, including: hatred, rebellion, murder, idolatry, sexual immorality, greed, racism, injustice, and violence. Forgive us for the works of the flesh and the pride of life. Forgive us for having fellowship or relationship with anything that is not of You. Forgive us for the doors that we may have opened through poor decisions. Help us to know that there is no condemnation to those of us who are in Christ and that as we confess our sins, we are forgiven and that You remember them no more. Father, forgive me for (list any sins that you have committed.)

Holy Spirit, remind us of those we need to forgive and help us to be quick to forgive. As for me, Holy Spirit, bring to my remembrance those I need to forgive. (Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal names or faces of people that you may need to forgive. As He reveals them say, "I forgive name of person(s)." Now, trust the Lord to heal any wounds in your soul caused by unforgiveness.)

Holy Spirit, help us not to yield to temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

O Lord, the God of our ancestor Israel, You are to be praised forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, power, glory, victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is Yours. This is Your Kingdom, Lord, and You are exalted as head over all. Riches and honor come from You alone, for You rule over everything. Power and might are in Your hand, and it is at Your discretion that people are made great and given strength. O Lord our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious Name. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture References for Written Text: Psalm 111:1-3, Revelation 4:11, Psalm 19:1, Psalm 133:1, Hebrews 4:25, Proverbs 27:17, Philippians 2:5, Psalm 111:1, Psalm 1:1-3, James 1:22, Romans 8:37, Matthew 5:16, Romans 8:1, Isaiah 43:25, Matthew 6:13, I Chronicles 29:10-13

4. Concepts to Consider

Ok. So now it's time to put the theory into practice. Give the small group experience a "test drive" for a week or two. Who knows what God may do among you?

Assemble a group of spiritual friends (3-15 people with whom you can experience a Wesleyan class meeting environment, OR, if you are already a part of a trusted, covenantal group that meets regularly, then you may feel you are ready for a "Band Meeting" experience of deeper accountability.

Please adhere to the following guidelines for constituting either your Class or Band Meeting, then please share with us your experience!

Response Form:

http://b.link/SmallGroupResponse

Optional Time of Centering/Soaking:

If possible, take some time, perhaps 5 to 15 minutes, to get into a comfortable position and simply allow the Lord to minister to you at a deep level (Psalm 42:7). Turn off or put down all distractions. Close your eyes. Hold in your thoughts a meaningful word, phrase, or image from the Scripture you read today. Release all other thoughts and concerns into the Presence of the Lord. If your thoughts wander, that's okay, just gently return to your Scriptural word, phrase, or image. You may want to set a timer.

A Basic Guide for Creating Small Covenant Groups

- A. Gather between 3-15 Christian friends, relatives, neighbors, and/or co-workers to meet with you regularly for approximately **1 hour**. (Could be shorter or longer, as the group agrees.) (**Special Note:** If you are "leveling up" to "Band Meeting" mode then your group should be same-gendered and same life stage (married, single, kids, etc.)
- B. Group members do not have to all be members of Windsor.
 - Meet once or twice to "try out" the small group dynamic. If you find the group helpful, then consider continuing the group for a set period of time. (Suggested: 6 weeks, then evaluate sustainability.)
 - Be open to new members. If your group gets too large, allow a new group to form by splitting the group.
 - You can choose to meet in person or virtually via conference call, FaceTime, Skype, Google Hangouts, Zoom, etc.
 - You are encouraged to meet in community wherever and whenever is convenient, appropriate, and comfortable for the group. Suggested locations: a group member's home, neighborhood/apartment club house, coffee shop, break room over lunch, library, etc.

- B. The group is covenanting together for the purposes of Godly fellowship, encouragement, respectful listening, Biblical discussion, and prayer. You may select a leader, or decide to rotate the leadership role each time you meet.
 - "Covenanting" means that appropriate confidentiality and Godly behavior, boundaries, and relationships are expected within the group. When you form a group, please register it online (http://bit.ly/WVCFGroups), or fill out the proper covenant form below and return it to Pastor Kim Orr, following the directions found at the bottom of each form.

A Suggested Group Meeting Agenda

- 1. General greeting; introduction of new group participants.
- 2. If possible, sing a hymn or praise song together.
- 3. Open in prayer.
- 4. Remind everyone of the Group Covenant guidelines (can simply read bullet points from the Small Group Participant Covenant below).
- 5. Use any or all of the Examen Questions from last week. (Note: If you are "leveling up" to "Band Meeting" mode, then make mutual, affirming, supportive, respectful confession of sin to one another a priority, in addition to one or two other Examen Questions.)

Some suggested questions:

- 1. For what moment(s) this week was/were I <u>most</u> grateful? For what moment(s) was/were I <u>least</u> grateful?
- 2. When did I give and receive the <u>most holy love</u> this week? When did I give and receive the <u>least love</u> this week?
- 3. When was I <u>most aware</u> of God's grace in my life this week? When was I <u>least aware</u> of God's grace in my life?
- 6. Share praise reports and prayer requests.
- 7. Pray for one another.
- 8. Dismiss

Share your small group experiences with us:

Response Form:

http://b.link/SmallGroupResponse

SMALL GROUP PARTICIPANT COVENANT

I will honor God, myself, and others by:

- Being on time to my group meeting.
- Listening respectfully. (Matthew 13:9)
- Praying for my group leader(s) and fellow group members. (Ephesians 6:18)
- Speaking with a kind tone, even when others may not. (Proverbs 15:1)
- Not gossiping; I will not share personal or sensitive information outside of the group. (Ephesians 4:29)
- Being dressed modestly. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- Setting appropriate interpersonal boundaries. No flirting, sexual conversations or jokes. (Ephesians 5:3-4)
- Not drinking alcohol during any Windsor Village Church Family endorsed or sponsored groups or event(s). (Proverbs 20:1; 1 Timothy 3:2-3)
- Respecting the rules, property, and managers of the location where our group meets. (Philippians 2:3)

By signing this covenant card, I am agreeing that I will, by the grace of God, abide by the above statements, and I will respectfully receive input and direction from Windsor Village Church Family supervisors and leadership.

Date:					
Printed Group Participant Name:					
·					
Email:					
Phone:					
Signature:					

^{**}Please register your group online at http://bit.ly/WVCFGroups
OR you can email a photo of your signed covenant form to korm@
wvumc.com **

SMALL GROUP LEADER COVENANT

(Titus 2; James 3:1-2)

I will honor God and my call as a group leader by treating those in my group with respect by:

- Arriving 5-10 minutes early to greet group members, and be prepared for the group session. (2 Timothy 2:15)
- Listening and gently encouraging participation by all group members (don't let one or two people dominate discussion). (Matthew 13:9)
- Regularly praying for all group members. (1 Samuel 12:23)
- Speaking with a kind tone, even when others may not. (Proverbs 15:1)
- Not gossiping; I will not share personal or sensitive information outside of the group, unless Pastoral attention is needed. (Ephesians 4:29)
- Being dressed modestly. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- Setting appropriate interpersonal boundaries. No flirting with or dating of participants. No sexual conversations or jokes. (Ephesians 5:3-4)
- Not drinking alcohol during any Windsor Village Church Family endorsed or sponsored group meetings or event(s).
 (Proverbs 20:1; 1 Timothy 3:2-3)
- Respecting the rules, property, and managers of the location where your group meets. (Philippians 2:3)

By signing this covenant card, I am agreeing that I will, by the grace of God, abide by the above statements, and I will respectfully receive input and direction from Windsor Village Church Family supervisors and leadership.

Date: Printed Leader Name:		
Email: Phone:		

Signature:



Day 62:

Test-Drive Spiritual Direction/Mentorship

1. Center Down

Our breath prayer for today. As you inhale, whisper, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God..." As you exhale whisper, "...have mercy on me a sinner."

2. Slowly read aloud the following Scripture

Elijah went straight out and found Elisha son of Shaphat in a field where there were twelve pairs of yoked oxen at work plowing; Elisha was in charge of the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak over him. Elisha deserted the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Please! Let me kiss my father and mother good-bye—then I'll follow you." "Go ahead," said Elijah, "but, mind you, don't forget what I've just done to you." So Elisha left; he took his yoke of oxen and butchered them. He made a fire with the plow and tackle and then boiled the meat—a true farewell meal for the family. Then he left and followed Elijah, becoming his right-hand man.

(1 Kings 19:19-21, MSG)

For further exploration:

Video: http://spiritual.watch/ExampleMentorship

3. Kingdom Prayer

All-Wise Father, thank You for the ability to learn and to grow. Thank You for our schools, colleges, universities, and trade schools where we can hone our skills and become better prepared to make a significant contribution to our world. You have anointed writers who have produced great literary works for us to study and enjoy from generation to generation. Thank You for Your Word which is a lamp to our feet, lighting the path of truth for us. Our lives are in Your hands, and You keep our feet from stumbling. We are grateful for the teachers, mentors, and leaders You have assigned to us throughout our lives who have shared their wisdom and knowledge with us. Those who love You cannot help but love learning, for to know You is to thirst for wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

Righteous Father, we, the members of the household of faith, commit ourselves to the support, endorsement, and expansion of education throughout our community. We declare that Your highest blessing is upon the Imani School, Neighborhood Centers Head Start Program, Jean Hines-Caldwell Elementary School, and The Prayer Institute. We confess that we will not neglect to show loyalty and kindness in all of our collaborations and

dealings. We proclaim that we have earned a good reputation through obedience as well as favor with You and with people. We decree that we are empowered to close the literacy gap between those those advantaged and who are disadvantaged. We will share our means, time, and talents to ensure that our children are wellequipped with all that they need to secure a solid and progressive education. We declare that You will generously provide all that they need to grow in excellence and to be able to exert their skills and talents in the marketplace in such a way that it brings glory. We proclaim that through our committed efforts to improve the accessibility of a quality education for everyone, we are operating as salt and light within our city. We bring hope through divine opportunity!

Choose a school or other learning institution in your community and commit to pray for the staff and students for one week:

Holy Spirit, let the wisdom of God come alive among the members of our various school boards: Houston ISD, Fort Bend ISD, Conroe ISD, Pearland ISD, Pasadena ISD, and others within the Greater Houston Area. Please draw unbelieving parents, educators, administrators, board members, and students to the Father through the witness of the believers You have planted in our schools. Awaken the awareness and compassion of our community leaders and legislators to the disparities within our current education system. Convict the hearts of those who

are not performing their duties in integrity and fairness. Help them to become more diligent and focused on their obligation to protect the rights of all children to have access to the best academic experience possible. Remind us as parents that the foundation of all education begins at home. Help us not to only teach our children the Word of God, but to also take time to expose them to daily learning opportunities that will improve their understanding. Strengthen us to model good self-discipline before them and to teach them the value of literacy and education.

Loving Father, forgive those who love ignorance more than knowledge. Forgive those of us for wasting precious opportunities to learn. Forgive us, as parents, for not being as involved in our children's academic lives as we should be. Forgive our legislators and community leaders for misappropriating and wasting vital funds to improve our education system. Forgive those of us for being too lazy to read and expand our minds. Forgive those of us for not nurturing the learning process in our young children and impeding their growth and success through our selfish distractions. Lord, forgive me for (list any sins that You have committed).

Holy Spirit, remind us of all those we need to forgive and help us to be quick to forgive. As for me, Holy Spirit, bring to my remembrance those I need to forgive. (Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal names or faces of people that You may need to forgive. As He reveals them say, "I forgive name of person(s)." Now, trust the Lord to heal any wounds in Your soul caused by unforgiveness.)

Holy Spirit, help us not to yield to temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

Worthy Father, all heaven will praise Your great wonders. A myriad of angels will praise You for Your faithfulness. For who in all of heaven can compare with You? What mightiest angel is anything like You? The highest angelic powers stand in awe of You. You are far more awesome than all who surround Your throne. O Lord God of Heaven's Armies! Where is there anyone as mighty as You? You are entirely faithful. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

<u>Scripture References for the Written Text</u>: Psalm 119:105, Psalm 66:9, John 14:26, Proverbs 3:3-4, II Corinthians 9:8, I Corinthians 10:31, Matthew 5:13, Matt ew 6:13, Psalm 89:5-8

4. Concepts to Consider

Do you have someone in your life that you look up to spiritually? Do you have a spiritual mentor? If not, consider the Biblical model we mentioned in Day 58 above. Spiritual directors or mentors are not meant to be counselors or advisers, *per se*, but are meant to offer a listening heart and ear that leads always back to the Presence of God. Sometimes we need an "outside" perspective.

If you have a spiritual mentor, then give him/her a call or meet with him/her at least once over the next week do some delving into how God may be working in your life. If you do not have a spiritual mentor or director then please choose one of the following options:

1. Contact someone that you look up to spiritually and request a one-time session with him/her (in-person or virtually). (Note: If the person does not feel comfortable doing so, that is the person's prerogative. Choose not to be offended, and with God's help, move on to another potential mentor.

If your potential mentor/director is agreeable to listen and pray with you, then here are some suggested questions for him/her to ask you:

- 1. What is your earliest memory of God? Can you describe that experience?
- 2. What is a story from your life that represents the essence of who you are? How might that story shed light on your current life situation?
- 3. How would you characterize your desire for God?
- 4. What do think is God's desire for you?
- 5. What are the things you believe that may stand between you and God?

(**NOTE:** For more suggested questions and a more indepth explanation, please read this excellent article: http://b.link/SpiritualDirectionQA)

2. If you have no idea who to reach out to in order to ind a reputable spiritual director/coach/mentor, then here is a list: http://spiritual.community/TXACDirectors

Remember, the interplay between one-on-one spiritual guidance and small-group discernment and sharing can truly help one become more deeply rooted in the soil of God's grace and love. Participating in this way is all done for the sake of becoming transformed in life and mind for the benefit of self and the world.

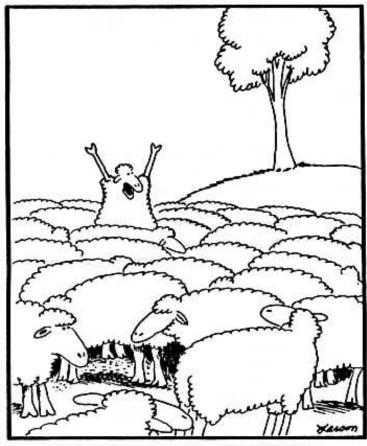
5. Reflection Questions

a. Personal Reflection. If you were able to participate in a spiritual direction/mentorship session, what did you find most helpful? What did you find challenging?

b. Kingdom Reflection. If more followers of Jesus participated in spiritual direction/mentorship how do you think it might affect the overall maturity and effectiveness of the world-wide Church?

Optional Time of Centering/Soaking:

If possible, take some time, perhaps 5 to 15 minutes, to get into a comfortable position and simply allow the Lord to minister to you at a deep level (Psalm 42:7). Turn off or put down all distractions. Close your eyes. Hold in your thoughts a meaningful word, phrase, or image from the Scripture you read today. Release all other thoughts and concerns into the Presence of the Lord. If your thoughts wander, that's okay, just gently return to your Scriptural word, phrase, or image. You may want to set a timer.



"Waiti Waiti Listen to mel . . . We don't HAVE to be just sheep!"

Day 63:

"Lone Sheep"

1. Center Down

Our breath prayer for today. As you inhale, whisper, "All we like sheep..." As you exhale whisper, "...are in Your care."

2. Slowly read aloud the following Scripture

By this time a lot of men and women of doubtful reputation were hanging around Jesus, listening intently. The Pharisees and religion scholars were not pleased, not at all pleased. They growled, "He takes in sinners and eats meals with them, treating them like old friends." Their grumbling triggered this story.

"Suppose one of you had a hundred sheep and lost one. Wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the lost one until you found it? When found, you can be sure you would put it across your shoulders, rejoicing, and when you got home call in your friends and neighbors, saying, 'Celebrate with me! I've found my lost sheep!' Count on it—there's more joy in heaven over one sinner's rescued life than over ninety-nine good people in no need of rescue. (Luke 15:1-7, MSG)

For further exploration:

Video: http://b.link/GoodShepherd

http://sheep.watch/ShepherdsVoice

3. Kingdom Prayer

Heavenly Father, You are great and Your power is understanding absolute. Your is bevond comprehension. We come clapping our hands and shouting joyful praises to You, our God. Most High, You are awesome! You are the great King of all the earth. We meditate on Your unfailing love as we worship in Your temple. Your Name will be praised to the ends of the earth. We honor You, as our Lord and Savior. We thank You, Lord, for Your tender mercies and unfailing love. Thank You for providing a way for sinners to be reconciled back to You. Thank You for enlightening our hearts to say "yes" to You when You called us. Lord, You are very great.

Father, it is Your desire that all men be saved and understand the truth. We confess that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is the only gate by which people are saved. We declare that when our unsaved family members, friends and enemies confess with their mouths, the Lord Jesus, and believe in their hearts that You raised Jesus from the dead, they will be saved. Father, we declare that they will know the truth, and the truth will set them free. As a Church Family, we gladly take the great commission and go into the world preaching the Good News to everyone You place in our paths. We confess that we are not

ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ because we know that it is Your power, God, that is at work saving everyone who believes.

Father, we cry out to You to clear the way so that Your Gospel may be preached in every city, state, country, and continent. Since the harvest is plentiful, please send laborers to proclaim Your Word of salvation to the unsaved. We ask You to save our unsaved family members, friends, co-workers and enemies, Surround them with the counsel of the Godly so that they may be washed in the water of Your Word; strip off the old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds, put on their new nature, so that they will be renewed as they learn to know their Creator and become like Him. Holy Spirit, as the Word goes forth, please touch the hearts of the unsaved to receive it. Help us, the Body of Christ, to present the Gospel with love, hope and patience. Father, we ask You to remove the scales from their eyes and circumcise the hearts of those who are in a backslidden state. Like the prodigal child, help them to come to themselves and return to You, their first love. Holy Spirit, remind them that nothing can ever separate them from God's love; not death, life, angels, demons, fears for today or worries about tomorrow, not even the powers of hell can separate them from the Father's love.

List the people that you know who are unsaved or backslidden. Ask the Holy Spirit for the wisdom to witness to these people. Trust Him to give you the courage to approach them and the words to say to them. Father, forgive the unsaved and backsliders for not acknowledging You or Your Son. Forgive them for disobedience, hatred, rebellion, murder, idolatry, sexual immorality, greed, racism, injustice, violence, and rejection of Your Gospel. Please have mercy upon them and extend Your grace toward them. Forgive us as a Church Family for not sharing Jesus and the Gospel with more people. Forgive us for being timid and reserved about sharing the Gospel. Forgive us for not reaching out to those who we know are in a backslidden state. Lord, forgive me for *(list any sins that You have committed)*.

Holy Spirit, remind us of all those we need to forgive and help us to be quick to forgive. As for me, Holy Spirit, bring to my remembrance those I need to forgive. (Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal names or faces of people that You may need to forgive. As He reveals them say, "I forgive name of person(s)." Now, trust the Lord to heal any wounds in Your soul caused by unforgiveness.)

Holy Spirit, help us all not to yield to temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

Holy, Holy, are You, the Lord God Almighty. You are worthy, to receive glory, honor and power. To You, the blessed and only Almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. You alone can never die, and You live in light so brilliant that no human can approach You. To You be all honor and power forever. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture References for the Written Text: Psalm 147:5, I Timothy 2:4, John 10:9, Romans 10:9, John 8:32, Mark 16:15, Romans 1:16, Luke 10:2, Colossians 3:9-10, Acts 9:18, Deuteronomy 10:16, Luke 15:11-32, Matthew 6:13, Revelation 4:8, Revelation 4:11, I Timothy 6:15-16

4. Concepts to Consider

Sheep are meant to be in herds and cared for by their shepherd, not out there on their own. In the wilderness --as in life--there are animals out there who want to eat lone sheep, and it's hard to find the best spiritual and emotional nourishment on your own, not to mention it can get awfully cold and lonely out there.

We all went astray like sheep, we have turned, each one on his way, and the Lord accepted [Jesus'] prayers for the iniquity of all of us. (Isaiah 53:6, Judaica)

So, today's lesson is simple: Don't be a "lone sheep"; instead, listen to the voice of our Shepherd who loves and cares for us and keeps the sheepfold--the church--in wholeness and grace.

A final parable for our consideration this week: Don't be like Shrek the Sheep who ran away from his farm:

The Merino [sheep] made headlines across the world in 2004 when he was found living in a cave after six years on the loose. When he was finally recovered, he was weighed down by an incredible [60 lb.]-fleece.

His long-awaited shearing was then broadcast live on television.

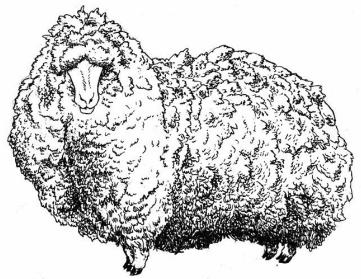
Despite his fame, Shrek's owner insists his prized sheep came from humble origins.

"He was just an ordinary sheep, went AWOL and hid, and when he was found he became the darling of the nation," said Shrek's owner John Perriam, in an interview with TVNZ.

"He had an unbelievable personality. He loved children and he was really good with the elderly in retirement homes."

[Shek passed away at age 17. His] memorial service [was held at] the Church of the Good Shepherd in Tekapo, NZ.

(Condensed from an article by Benjamin Gottlieb for CNN; http://sheep.watch/ShrekStory)



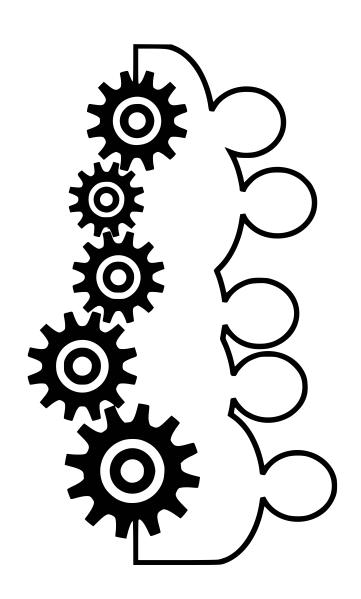
5. Reflection Questions

a. <u>Personal Reflection</u>. Did you participate in accountability this week? If so, what was your experience like? If not, what prevented you from participating? Take any resistance to God. What does He need to heal?

b. <u>Kingdom Reflection</u>. The church began as small groups of accountability, study, and prayer. And subsequent renewal movements have mostly run on this same engine. The "macro" of corporate worship is absolutely necessary AND works in tandem with the "micro" of small groups and individual spiritual formation. How will you incorporate accountability, spiritual mentorship, and small groups into your Christian life?

Optional Time of Centering/Soaking:

If possible, take some time, perhaps 5 to 15 minutes, to get into a comfortable position and simply allow the Lord to minister to you at a deep level (Psalm 42:7). Turn off or put down all distractions. Close your eyes. Hold in your thoughts a meaningful word, phrase, or image from the Scripture you read today. Release all other thoughts and concerns into the Presence of the Lord. If your thoughts wander, that's okay, just gently return to your Scriptural word, phrase, or image. You may want to set a timer.



Windsor Village Church Family 6011 W. Orem, Houston, TX 77065 713-723-8187

Prayer Power Line: 713-721-4821

www.kingdombuilders.com www.facebook.com/incitewindsor www.prayerinstitute.com

Kirbyjon H. Caldwell, Senior Pastor